

**Montana Wildlife Federation φ Idaho Wildlife Federation φ Wyoming Wildlife Federation  
New Mexico Wildlife Federation φ Nevada Wildlife Federation φ Colorado Wildlife Federation  
South Dakota Wildlife Federation φ Arizona Wildlife Federation φ Conservation Northwest (WA)  
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council φ North Dakota Wildlife Federation  
Planning and Conservation League (CA) φ Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR)  
National Wildlife Federation**

August 7, 2019

The Hon. Lisa Murkowski, Chair  
The Hon. Joe Manchin, Ranking Member  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Raul Grijalva  
The Hon. Rob Bishop, Ranking Member  
Natural Resources Committee  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Lisa Murkowski, Chair  
The Hon. Tom Udall, Ranking Member  
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Betty McCollum, Chair  
The Hon. David Joyce, Ranking Member  
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20505

Dear Senators and Representatives,

We represent hundreds of thousands of Western hunters, anglers and other conservationists who hold a deep reverence for our nation’s public lands—lands owned by all Americans and managed by the federal government.

As the western affiliates of the National Wildlife Federation, we write with grave concern that your Congressional authority is being undermined by the Administration, and, as a result, our country’s public lands hang in the balance.

Last week, William Perry Pendley was installed by Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt to a new position “exercising authority of the director” the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Despite never receiving Senate confirmation for any position, nor even being formally nominated, Mr. Pendley will run an agency that manages 248 million acres of public land mostly across the West, land that is in our backyards and owned by all Americans. The problem: Mr. Pendley is a fierce advocate for the sale and transfer of our federal lands. Put simply, he believes public lands should not be in public hands.

Mr. Pendley’s anti-public lands ideology may have been acceptable for his previous position as the president of the Mountain States Legal Foundation — an activist group which for years has brought lawsuits against the agency in an effort to curtail its management and authority over our public lands — but not for an acting director of BLM. For example, under Mr. Pendley’s watch, Mountain States Legal Foundation supported public land trespassers who held an armed standoff and threatened the lives of BLM employees. This antipathy for public lands and outward hostility towards public servants who manage them must not be a belief held by someone in

charge of the agency. Further, the goal of selling off our federal lands is fundamentally in opposition to the bureau's statutory responsibilities, its reason for being, its values, and its mission.

Most troubling, Mr. Pendley has been tapped to exercise the authority of the BLM Director without being nominated or confirmed by the Senate for the position. The Administration will not advance his name for the Senate's Constitutionally required advice and consent, undoubtedly because his nomination would fail.

Now Congress and the American people will not hear about Mr. Pendley's views and approach to managing our federal lands given his belief that the American public should not own them. We will not hear an explanation of how this appointment squares with the commitments the Secretary made repeatedly that the Administration does not support selling off or transferring public lands. We will not hear how the Secretary plans to manage Mr. Pendley's numerous conflicts of interest, nor will we hear who recommended his appointment and why.

This is unacceptable.

The appointment of an anti-public lands crusader to be given the full authority of the BLM director comes on the heels of the announcement that the Secretary plans to move 84% of the current BLM staff in Washington to new western locations by October 1, 2019. The Secretary says this will put agency staff closer to the lands it manages and the industries that make a living off those lands, but that disregards the plain fact that 90% of BLM staff already work in the field.

Combined with the appointment of Mr. Pendley, the lack of transparency or oversight of the announced move has led some former BLM employees to speculate that the move is a calculated step toward dismantling the agency, which in turn will bolster arguments for the selling off and privatization of public land.

We are concerned that the Department is flouting Congressional oversight by installing an unconfirmed director and undertaking a significant agency restructuring — without Senate confirmation or Congressional approval. We respectfully request you blunt this executive overreach by taking three actions:

1. Demand that the administration revoke Mr. Pendley's appointment.
2. Place a freeze on any BLM spending that would enable implementation of BLM's westward relocation until a BLM director is nominated, testifies before Congress on his or her beliefs about public lands, and is confirmed.
3. Hold oversight hearings on BLM proposed restructuring to determine whether such a move is in the national interest and will protect public lands for future generations.

Our public lands put food on our tables, support wildlife habitat, give us a place to recreate and find solace, and provide natural resources that support jobs in our communities. These lands that are owned by all of us are one of America's finest ideas and deserve protection and wise stewardship, not wholesale attack through mismanagement and selloff.

We urge you to act.

Sincerely,

Dave Chadwick  
Executive Director  
Montana Wildlife Federation

Jesse Deubel  
Executive Director  
New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Dwayne Meadows  
Executive Director  
Wyoming Wildlife Federation

Mitch Friedman  
Executive Director  
Conservation Northwest (WA)

Robert Gaudet  
President  
Nevada Wildlife Federation

Meredith Trainor  
Executive Director  
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

Collin O'Mara  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
National Wildlife Federation

Brian Brooks  
Executive Director  
Idaho Wildlife Federation

Chris Hesla  
Executive Director  
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John Bradley  
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Howard Penn  
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Planning and Conservation League (CA)

Brad Powell  
President  
Arizona Wildlife Federation

Suzanne O'Neill  
Executive Director  
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Chris Hager  
Executive Director  
Association of NW Steelheaders (OR)